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Fiftieth session

UNHCR'S INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its forty-fifth session the Executive Committee endorsed the High Commissioner's proposal (EC/SC.2/70 of 16 September 1994) to establish an Inspection and Evaluation Service (IES). A review of evaluation within UNHCR undertaken by an external consultant in the second half of 1998 recommended the separation of inspection and evaluation functions. This recommendation was accepted, and in February 1999 responsibility for evaluation was transferred to a new Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit in the Department of Operations, under the direct supervision of the Assistant High Commissioner. At that time, IES was renamed the Inspector General's Office (IGO). This report covers developments in inspection and investigation over the twelve months ending 31 July 1999; a separate report (A/AC.96/919) covers evaluation.

2. Inspections provide the High Commissioner with comprehensive and systematic assessments of UNHCR operations, focusing on those factors, both internal and external to UNHCR, considered most relevant to the effective and efficient discharge of UNHCR's responsibilities. The Inspector General's Office is located within the Executive Office and the Inspector General reports directly to the High Commissioner. The Inspector General is also the central focal point for investigation in UNHCR. The IGO acts as Secretariat for the Oversight Committee, which ensures effective review and follow-up of oversight reports (including audit reports). The Oversight Committee has met five times in the past year.

II. INSPECTION

3. Inspections in this reporting period covered activities in a further 14 countries, bringing to 74 the total inspected. The review of operations in Croatia, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and in Albania was completed in January 1999 (those in Bosnia and Herzegovina were the last inspected in the previous period). Operations in Australia, Japan and Papua New Guinea were inspected in October 1998; those in Burundi were inspected in early 1999. Thereafter, three operations in Western Europe (United Kingdom, Ireland and France) were inspected, followed by three in south-east Asia (Laos, Cambodia and Thailand). As previously, an

experienced colleague from the Department of International Protection has been an integral member of the inspection team. The Standing Committee is kept informed of inspection activities through the updates on regional developments.

4. The then Division of Human Resources Management at Headquarters was inspected in the second half of 1998. IGO also undertakes management reviews in response to specific requests. In late 1998, the Inspector General began a review of the Headquarters' structure with a small team that included colleagues from other units as well as from field offices. His report with recommendations for restructuring was issued in February 1999. A review of the role of the desk (the focal point for operations in one or more countries) within the Regional Bureaux was undertaken during this period. IGO also proposed options for the new management structure for Africa.

5. In October 1998, IES issued the sixth in the series "Inspector's Notes on Lessons Learnt", covering an analysis of the inspection process and follow-up to inspection missions, with particular reference to measures to further reduce the time between the end of an inspection and the closure of the implementation follow-up file. These notes are distributed to members of the Senior Management Committee. In April 1999, the Inspector General submitted to the High Commissioner a second report analysing compliance with inspection recommendations, which is monitored through the inspection database. This report found compliance to be generally satisfactory, and identified two areas for action: a streamlining of inspection procedures and a closer involvement of Headquarters' units in ensuring compliance with recommendations to field offices.

6. IGO staff received training and guidance from the Offices of the Inspectors General of the State Department (United States) and the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and consulted with other governmental officials with relevant experience. UNHCR's inspection methodology and procedures were further refined in the course of the year as an on-going process. A key management tool for the staff of IGO is the Inspection Handbook, the third edition of which was produced in October 1998.

III. INVESTIGATION

7. As the focal point for investigation, the Inspector General is responsible for the overall coordination of investigations. Areas of concern include, but are not limited to, possible fraud, misuse of UNHCR funds or resources, waste or abuse of UNHCR facilities, abuse of authority or United Nations privileges, sexual harassment and other misconduct or improper conduct constituting violations of United Nations and UNHCR regulations, rules or relevant administrative instructions. Reports of matters that may warrant investigation are made directly to, or are referred to the Inspector General. Procedures are in place to ensure confidentiality. On receipt of such reports, the Inspector General consults as necessary in order to determine whether an investigation is warranted and, if so, ensures that it is undertaken in an appropriate manner. He then monitors progress and follows up as required until action is complete and the case is finally closed. A confidential investigation database has been established. The Inspector General liaises closely with the Investigations Section of the Office of Internal Oversight Services and investigation counterparts in other United Nations organizations. In March 1999, a senior staff member of IGO and a colleague from the Legal Advice Section of the Human Resources Service participated in the United Nations' Investigator Training Programme, organized by the World Food Programme's Inspector General at the United States Government's Federal Law Enforcement Training Centre in Georgia.